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ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been an unmistakable trend toward private education. Private school enrollments in almost all affiliations (with the exception of Catholic schools) have increased dramatically since 1965. What is it that private schools are offering that attracts families of all races, ethnic backgrounds, and religious denominations? This study provides one possible answer to this question in a narrow sense--through a trend analysis of school size and pupil teacher ratios. Specifically, the study examined changes in per pupil teacher ratios in private elementary and secondary schools within a 5-year period. Two data tapes obtained from the National Center of Education Statistics showed that private schools had smaller class sizes in 1980 than in 1976 even though their enrollments had increased. One might expect that private schools, tied by continuous financial burdens, would absorb new pupils into existing classes and thus increase their class sizes. However, this apparently has not been the case. This paper discusses trends in class size among private schools and examines the reasons for the willingness of private schools to maintain small class sizes regardless of the financial costs. A 15-item reference list is provided. (Authors/DCS)

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TRENDS IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS:
School and Class Size Implications

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April, 1985, Chicago, Illinois

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Trends in Private Schools:
School and Class Size Implications

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Introduction

Currently, private schools constitute about 18 percent of all elementary and secondary schools in the United States. Additionally, they enroll over 10 percent of all U.S. students at the elementary and secondary levels, produce about 10 percent of all high school graduates and employ about 11 percent of all teachers in the elementary grades (Erickson 1984, p.2). One recent analysis predicts that the private school share of elementary and secondary enrollment will rise to 15 percent by 1990 (Cooper et al. 1983). Given the economic constraints faced by many families, why are private schools remaining and for some affiliations attracting an increasing number of students? This paper suggests one plausible answer to that question. By analyzing school size and pupil-teacher ratios in private schools over a five year period it would appear that efforts by various types of private schools to maintain low pupil-teacher ratios enhances their attractability and in that sense may be a concious administrative objective.

Background

In 1965, private school enrollments peaked at 6.4 million. At the time, private for the most part meant Catholic, accounting for 88% (5.6 million) of the population (National Catholic Education Association 1984). Since that time, a significant shift has occurred in the private school sector with decreases in number of schools and pupils for Catholics, but increases in the same respect for most all other affiliations. From 1965 to 1983, the number of Catholic schools declined by 30% (from 13,292 to 9,432), together with 5.6

to 3.02 million enrollment drop. However, other private schools by 1984 had increased their schools numbers to 17,300, accounting for 65% of all private schools. Though the average size of these schools is less than Catholic schools, their rising enrollments account for an increasing 27% of the private school population (Cooper 1984, P.2).

"Smallness" has traditionally been one of private schools unique and attractive features (with the exception of some Catholic schools). The average private school statistically has an enrollment under 300 and in some affiliations a good deal less than that (see Table I). In a review of the literature, the 300 figure is often used as the cut-off point for categorizing a school as "small" (Schneider 1980).

Traditional research on the effects of school size and effective student outcomes tends to be more descriptive than analytical. In some cases, individuals who support small schools will use personal accounts and descriptive studies to indicate the benefits students receive when attending a small school. Such journalistic research provides very impressionable indicators that small schools indeed have a greater sense of community, provide increased opportunities for student and teacher interactions, increase participation in school activities, effect change with greater ease, and present a student with a greater opportunity to discover his or her identity (North Central Association Committee on Small Schools, 1974: pp. 6-7). In addition however, there have been several important empirical studies which tend to support some of the traditional, more subjective accounts. This research indicates that small schools do provide greater opportunities for participation in school activities (Barker and Gump 1964, p.202), have greater interaction and communication among students and teachers (Chambers 1972, pp.12-13) and produce higher achievement

TABLE 1
Mean School Enrollment by Affiliation *
1976 - 1980

AFFILIATION	YEAR								Dif in $\bar{x}$ 1976-1980	
	1976		1977		1978		1980			
	open	all yrs	open	all yrs	open	all yrs	open	all yrs	open	all yrs
BAPTIST	257	274	256	275	268	282	227	284	-30	+10
CALVINIST	254	260	256	259	253	256	249	257	-5	-3
EASTERN ORTHODOX	233	233	230	217	229	218	228	224	-4	-9
EPISCOPAL	248	255	252	256	257	261	256	268	+8	+13
FRIENDS	341	358	348	357	359	359	312	364	-29	+6
JEWISH	237	262	247	264	258	271	242	282	+5	+20
LUTHERAN	154	156	155	156	156	157	151	159	-3	+3
METHODIST	231	276	238	280	250	280	221	272	-10	-4
PRESBYTERIAN	244	249	237	247	243	252	215	261	-29	+12
SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST	112	99	117	100	107	99	92	93	-24	-6
OTHER	157	181	165	181	169	187	163	190	+6	+9
NOT AFFILIATED	275	277	272	277	274	279	227	281	-48	+4
CATHOLIC	350	359	344	353	339	346	338	339	-12	-20
CHRISTIAN NONDENOMIN.	214	214	209	213	213	219	171	231	-43	+17
AMISH, MENNONITE	80	80	80	80	78	78	60	73	-20	-7
ASSEMBLY GOD	226	226	234	237	247	251	181	254	-45	+28
PENTACOSTAL	104	104	101	103	108	109	99	107	-5	+2
CHURCH OF CHRIST	411	411	416	431	421	435	290	420	-121	+9
YEARLY MEAN	289	303	286	300	286	296	269	293	-20	-10

SOURCE: NCES, "NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL UNIVERSE 1976-1980," WASHINGTON, D.C.
*rounded to nearest integer

Note (A) Figures (OPEN) reflect all schools
(B) Figures (ALL YRS) reflect only those schools open all years of survey

scores (Summers and Wolfe 1977, Schneider 1979, Coleman 1980 and Slaughter and Schneider 1975) than large schools. It should then not be surprising that as Americans react to perceived deficiencies of some public school systems, private schools would play an increasing role as an alternative solution.

Class Size Research

As opposed to the relatively recent research on school size, the examination of the effects of "class size" has been prolific since the turn of the century. A significant portion of the research strove towards ascertaining whether the size of the class had a relationship to the educational progress of the students. However, teacher and instructional effects in relation to class size were also areas of inspection by many researchers. Rudimentary studies in the area can be traced back to G. M. Rice in 1902. He, like some others in the next 20 years, could find no strong relationship between class size and student attainment. After a period of neglect in the late 1930's and 1940's, research attention on affects of class size was revived in the decade of the 50's. Though there were numerous studies supporting both sides of the issue, the more established researchers seem intent on demonstrating that lecture classes could be doubled, or even tripled, in size without loss of effectivenss (Glass, 1982 p. 38). In a general sense, their work was seized upon by the "Great Society" which needed to expand and mobilize its educational system. While efforts to build bigger schools with large classes were initially successful, the research foundation was widely criticized and eventually contradicted. For example, Jackson (1968) found that a teacher in a typical classroom has over 1000 interactions with students each day. As the class size increased, so did the likelihood that some students would be

lost in the crowd, inattentive, unnoticed, or become behavioral problems. Shaver and Nuhn (1971) found by studying students in stages from tutorial instruction to a class size of twenty, that achievement was significantly higher the smaller the group. As the emphasis developed on the time-on-task concept, Cahen (1981) found the more students in a given class the more difficult it was for the teacher to monitor behavior and maintain a high student attention rate.

Perhaps the single most significant study on class size is the meta analysis of Gene Glass and his co-workers (1982). Glass' analysis of the universe of educational research clearly demonstrated that "smaller is better". Eighty-five percent of the studies found pupil achievement higher, 83% found teacher effects (morale, absences, professional growth) higher and 91% found instructional effects (creativeness, interaction, class atmosphere) higher in small rather than in larger classes. However, the relationship is not linear. Small classes were considerably better than large classes, but large classes were not significantly better than very large classes. Thus a class size of 10 is shown to be more effective than one of 30, but a class of 30 pupils is not significantly better than a class twice that size.

Research Perspective and Data Sources

While private schools have generally been characterized as small schools, whether or not they also have small class sizes has been open to some speculation. For example. Chambers (1972) found that the pupil teacher ratio in Catholic schools was slightly higher than in Public schools. Coleman (1981) also reports a ratio higher for Catholic schools than for Public Schools. Glass (1982) estimates the national average to be nearly twenty students per

teacher with a faily large variation among states. Unfortunately, class size data can not be viewed in a vaccuum, or as necessarily representative of the typical classroom. For example, in the area of staffing, public schools are required by law (i.e. ESEA/Title I and PL 94-142) to retain a higher number of special education teachers than private schools choose too. Their presence, and the small number of pupils they work with, can have a significant statistical effect on such public school class size figures, especially in the last twenty years. Additionally, Catholic schools are but one private affiliation. This study examines the school and class size characteristics of all the private school affiliations.

Data Source. The data source for this study is a combination of the "Non-Public Elementary and Secondary School Survey for Three Years (1976-1977, 1977-1978, 1978-1979)" and the "Private School Survey 1980". The two data sources were combined under the title "Non-Public School Universe 76-80" by the National Center of Educational Statistics. Even though this data file of more than 20,000 private schools contained a number of survey items, only pupil teacher ratios, mean enrollments, staffing data and survival rates for the five year period were used in this analysis. Care was taken to control for special education, vacational and home schools in order that they not effect this particular analysis.

Even with the best of research controls, data on private schools is generally suspect by nature. This lack of definitive data is due in part to the following: (1) some private schools open and close with such rapidity that agencies cannot keep track, (2) some schools are unaffiliated with national or local Associations making accurate data collection nearly impossible, and (3) some schools consciously choose to remain unknown or refuse to defined as a "school" instead of church or religious congregation (Cooper et, al. 1983,

p.155). For example, when NCES attempted to survey the universe of private schools in 1978 they were able to identify 19,666 schools. However, Cooper in 1982 using a cross-sectional analysis, with in-depth school search methods, estimated that the universe survey reached only 72% of the non-Catholic private schools in existence that year.

Despite these inherent survey problems, the data file in use here does represent a high percentage of all U.S. private schools. The sheer number of respondents make certain forms of data more reliable than the cross-section/ sampling approach. Two such data areas are mean enrollments and pupil-teacher ratios. Even slight changes in these areas for the affiliations over the survey period may be viewed as trend indicators.

Data Trends

Table 1 provides figures of private school mean enrollments by affiliation for the five year period. These figures represent means of all types of schools within affiliations. In that sense, they can be misleading. For example, not all private affliations choose to or are capable of sponsoring the same proportion of larger Secondary schools or combined Elementary and Secondary schools. However, in a general sense the data reveals private schools are indeed relatively small, averaging near 300 for the five years leading up to 1980. By reference, Coleman found public school mean enrollments (high schools) to average over 700 in his 1981 comparative study of public and private schooling. The Catholic affiliation, having the the largest population and nearly the highest mean enrollments, affect the total figures in a seemingly disproportionate manner. For example, Lutherans who compose the third largest private affiliation have a mean enrollment of 156 for this period. Amish schools report the lowest mean enrollment with 78.

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PUPIL/TEACHER RATIO FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

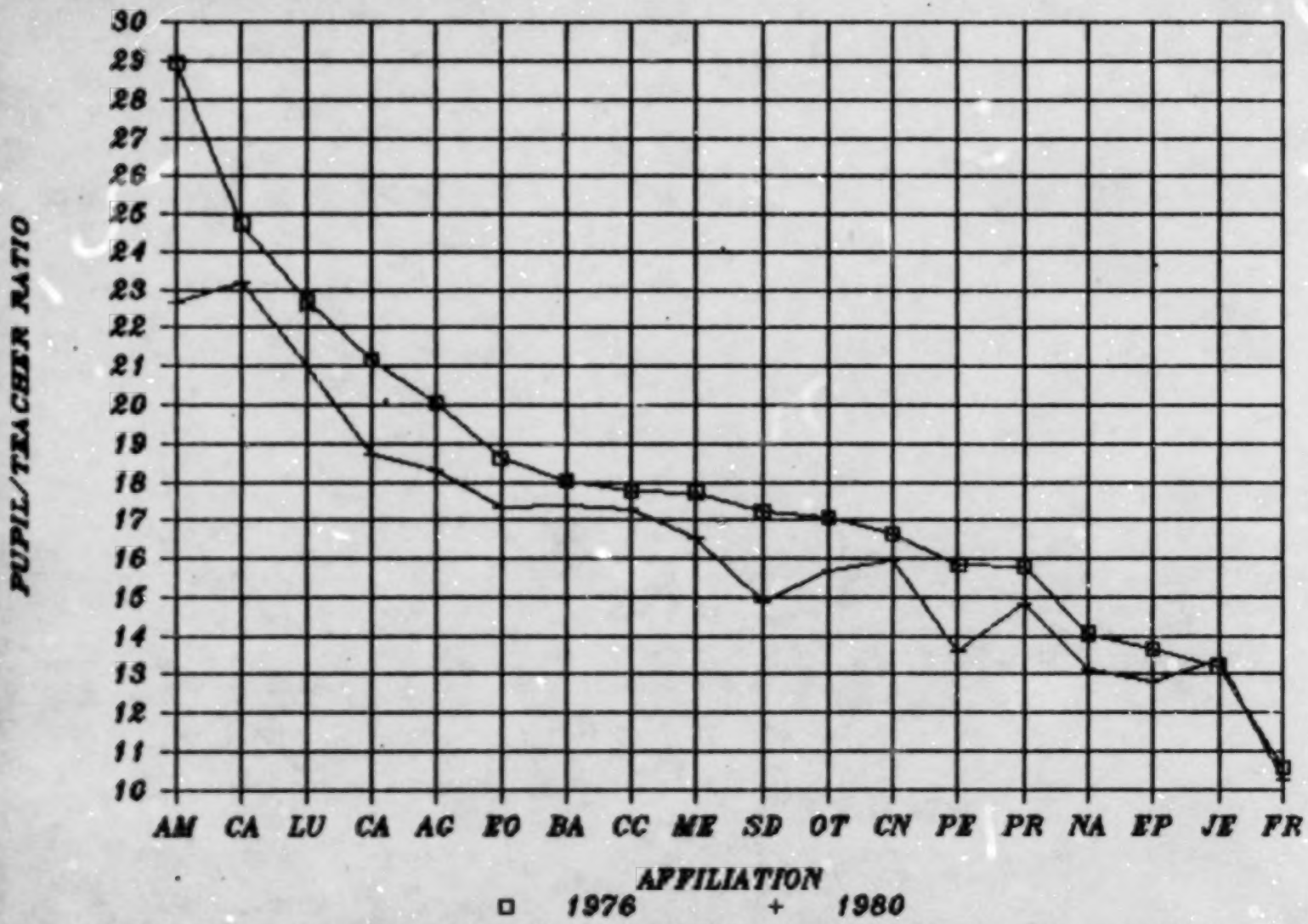

Figure 1. Mean Pupil-Teacher Ratio for Private School Affiliation 1976 and 1980

Source: NCES, "NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL UNIVERSE 1976-1980" Washington, D.C. (Table 2)

Note: AM:AMISH, CA:CATHOLIC, LU:LUTHERAN, CA:CALVINIST, AG:ASS. of GOD, EO:EAST ORTH., BA: BAPTIST, CC:CH. OF CHRIST ME: METHODIST, SD:7th DAY, OT:OTHER, CN:CHRIST NON., PE:PENTACOSTAL, PR:PRESBY., NA:NOT AFF., EP:EPIS, JE:JEWISH

TABLE 2
Mean Pupil/Teacher Ratio by Affiliation and Type*
1976 - 1980

AFFILIATION	YEAR								Dif in $\bar{x}$ 1976-1980	
	1976		1977		1978		1980			
	open	all yrs	open	all yrs	open	all yrs	open	all yrs	open	all yrs
BAPTIST	17.88	18.04	17.68	17.85	17.60	17.69	16.53	17.40	-1.35	-0.64
CALVINIST	21.30	21.18	19.81	19.68	19.55	19.42	18.74	18.74	-2.56	-2.44
EASTERN ORTHODOX	18.63	18.63	17.24	17.19	18.04	18.21	17.08	17.33	-1.55	-1.30
EPISCOPAL	13.75	13.65	13.40	13.35	13.52	13.47	13.01	12.80	-0.74	-0.85
FRIENDS	10.32	10.58	10.23	10.45	10.52	10.52	10.55	10.25	+0.23	-0.33
JEWISH	12.97	13.20	13.08	13.04	13.02	12.85	12.99	13.41	+0.02	+0.21
LUTHERAN	22.61	22.70	21.62	21.74	21.45	21.52	20.66	21.03	-1.95	-1.67
METHODIST	17.08	17.73	15.98	16.79	15.84	16.63	15.12	16.53	-1.96	-1.20
PRESBYTERIAN	15.84	15.78	14.27	14.27	15.67	15.42	14.44	14.84	-1.40	-0.94
SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST	17.06	17.24	17.69	17.96	17.30	17.44	14.75	14.86	-2.31	-2.38
OTHER	14.64	17.07	14.54	16.46	14.54	16.47	15.00	15.70	+0.36	-1.37
NOT AFFILIATED	14.05	14.06	13.71	13.68	13.71	13.70	13.37	13.12	-0.68	-0.94
CATHOLIC	24.41	24.76	24.01	24.34	23.80	24.07	23.08	23.17	-1.33	-1.59
CHRISTIAN NONDENOMIN.	16.64	16.64	16.17	16.06	16.06	15.95	15.70	15.95	-0.94	-0.69
AMISH, MENNONITE	28.93	28.93	27.74	27.90	26.92	26.97	22.62	22.65	-6.31	-6.28
ASSEMBLY OF GOD	20.06	20.06	18.52	18.31	18.58	18.47	17.27	18.29	-2.79	-1.77
PENTACOSTAL	15.85	15.85	14.87	15.02	14.44	14.79	13.37	13.63	-2.48	-2.22
CHURCH OF CHRIST	17.78	17.78	17.67	17.72	18.09	18.03	16.42	17.28	-1.36	-0.50
YEARLY MEAN	21.39	22.02	21.03	21.59	20.98	21.37	19.81	20.78	-1.58	-1.54

SOURCE: NCES, "NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL UNIVERSE 1976-1980," WASHINGTON, D.C.
*rounded to nearest hundredth

Note (A) Figures (OPEN) represent all schools
(B) Figures (ALL YRS) reflect only those schools open all years of survey

Even though the yearly mean enrollment for the total population declined, twelve of the eighteen affiliations (i.e. Baptist, Episcopal, Friends, Jewish, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Assembly of God, Pentacostal, Church of Christ, Christian Nondenominational, Not Affiliated and Other) record net increases in school size. Again the major exception are the Catholic schools which dropped from 350 in 1976 to 339 in 1980.

Figure 1 illustrates the mean pupil-teacher trend for the survey period for all 18 affiliations. All affiliations, with the exception of Jewish schools, record a lower pupil-teacher ratio in 1980 than in 1976 (see Table 2). The greatest decline is in the 412 Amish schools (-6.28). The net pupil-teacher ratio decline for the total population stands at -1.54 for the period. Even though the overall ratios seems relatively high (21.88), the Catholic schools appear again to seriously affect the figures. Actually, all but three of the affiliations are below the 20 figure and 9 of those have ratios below 15.

Declining class size indications were accompanied by an increase in the number of teacher employed during the period. All school affiliations, regardless of enrollment trends, show and increase in the number of teachers for those schools that remained open all five years (Table 3). The greatest increases are in the Episcopal schools (+2.70), with the smallest increases in the Seventh Day Adventist and Amish schools, +0.05 respectively. The mean number of teachers on a yearly basis remained near the 1975 figure of 14.59, declining in 1978, but increasing again in 1980 to 15.20. Catholics account for the magnitude of the drop in 1978, but are accompanied by six other affiliations as well. Each of these groups (except the Calvinists) also experienced a temporary increase in pupil-teacher ratios for that year.

TABLE 3
Mean Number of Teachers by Affiliation and Type*
1976 - 1980

AFFILIATION	YEAR								Dif in $\bar{x}$ 1976-1980	
	1976		1977		1978		1980			
	open	/all yrs	open	/all yrs	open	/all yrs	open	/all yrs	open	all yrs
BAPTIST	14.54	15.34	14.37	15.29	15.13	15.78	13.20	16.04	-1.34	+0.70
CALVINIST	11.44	11.74	12.29	12.48	12.25	12.44	12.78	13.22	+1.34	+1.48
EASTERN ORTHODOX	12.55	12.55	13.67	13.00	12.67	11.91	13.38	13.09	+0.83	+0.54
EPISCOPAL	19.31	19.83	20.26	20.57	20.47	20.68	21.49	22.61	+2.18	+2.78
FRIENDS	32.51	33.86	34.08	34.65	34.38	34.38	30.71	35.92	-1.79	+2.06
JEWISH	18.05	19.69	18.74	19.97	19.98	21.08	18.23	20.80	+0.18	+1.11
LUTHERAN	6.84	6.85	7.10	7.11	7.19	7.18	7.14	7.42	+0.30	+0.57
METHODIST	13.84	16.36	15.22	17.52	15.61	17.15	14.74	17.39	+0.90	+1.03
PRESBYTERIAN	15.08	15.46	16.44	17.17	15.80	16.54	15.07	18.00	-0.01	+2.54
SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST	6.50	5.63	6.69	5.52	6.13	5.54	5.69	5.68	-0.81	+0.05
OTHER	11.11	11.90	11.79	12.29	12.15	12.46	11.40	13.04	+0.29	+1.14
NOT AFFILIATED	20.91	21.07	21.29	21.71	21.29	21.71	18.37	22.97	-2.54	+1.93
CATHOLIC	14.74	14.96	14.75	14.94	14.65	14.81	15.23	15.21	+0.49	+0.25
CHRISTIAN NONDENOMIN.	12.97	12.97	12.89	13.21	13.02	13.37	10.43	14.07	-2.54	+1.10
AMISH, MENNONITE	3.82	3.82	3.86	3.85	3.89	3.90	3.13	3.86	-0.69	+0.05
ASSEMBLY OF GOD	11.24	11.24	12.34	12.62	13.05	13.29	9.84	13.33	-1.40	+2.09
PENTACOSTAL	7.33	7.33	6.79	6.83	7.63	7.56	7.81	8.22	+0.48	+0.89
CHURCH OF CHRIST	22.67	22.67	23.50	24.31	23.21	24.06	17.04	24.14	-5.63	+1.47
YEARLY MEAN	14.20	14.59	14.35	14.73	14.37	14.69	14.21	15.20	+0.01	+0.61

SOURCE: NCES, "NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL UNIVERSE 1976-1980," WASHINGTON, D.C.
*rounded to nearest hundredth

Note (A) Figures (OPEN) represent all schools
(B) Figures (ALL YRS) reflects only those schools open all years of survey

TABLE 4
Survival Rate by Affiliation and Type *
1976 - 1980

TYPE

AFFILIATION	ELEM & MID	SECONDARY	COMBINED ELEM & MID	ALT & OTHER	COMBINED SURVIVAL RATE
BAPTIST	79.44	62.50	87.61	100.00	82.39
CALVINIST	85.89	100.00	100.00	N/A	95.63
EASTERN ORTHODOX	100.00	100.00	N/A	N/A	100.00
EPISCOPAL	90.24	93.62	92.59	100.00	94.11
FRIENDS	92.31	80.00	100.00	100.00	93.08
JEWISH	78.20	48.84	72.06	100.00	74.77
LUTHERAN	94.52	86.54	95.12	100.00	94.12
METHODIST	68.18	71.43	92.86	N/A	77.49
PRESBYTERIAN	95.45	85.71	94.74	100.00	93.97
SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST	88.66	75.41	79.81	100.00	85.97
OTHER	14.54	7.58	25.08	N/A	15.73
NOT AFFILIATED	94.30	98.84	99.76	95.06	97.89
CATHOLIC	94.93	86.85	89.09	100.00	92.69
CHRISTIAN NONDENOMIN.	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
AMISH, MENNONITE	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
ASSEMBLY OF GOD	100.00	N/A	100.00	N/A	100.00
PENTACOSTAL	100.00	N/A	100.00	N/A	100.00
CHURCH OF CHRIST	100.00	N/A	100.00	N/A	100.00

SOURCE: NCES, "NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL UNIVERSE 1976-1980," Washington, D.C.
* % rounded to nearest hundredth

Table 4. shows the survival rates of the different affiliations. These figures reflect the percentage of those schools by affiliation who were in existence in 1976 and remained so through 1980. The survival ratio among most affiliations is extremely high, especially with traditional church related schools. By far the most volitile affiliation is in the category of "Other" private schools. Of some 928 schools that began in 1976, only 156 remained open in 1980. Of the more traditional affiliations, Jewish schools record the lowest survival rate (74.77%). Of particular note, only 48% of the Jewish secondary schools survived all five years. Other apparently risky affiliations include Baptist secondary schools (62.50%) and Methodist elementary schools (68.18%). Catholic schools record an overall 92.69% rate with most trouble in their secondary schools (86.85%).

There are several points to be made on class size trends and survivability within the private schools surveyed. First, class size (pupil-teacher ratio) seemingly dropped in all affiliations regardless of enrollment trends. If the ratio had dropped strictly as a function of enrollment, the two could be neatly explained. However, teacher retention does not seem to be a critical factor here. All affiliations show a greater number of teachers in 1980 than in 1976, even those whose school size declined during the period. The second point concerns the school survivability demonstrated. One third of the affiliations had no schools close during the five year period. Others like Baptist, Friends, Lutheran, 7th Day Adventist and Catholic experienced their lowest rates within their secondary schools. The most notable exception to the survival rate norm is the non-traditional/non affiliated "Other" group. Yet since these schools represent only a small percentage of the population they may not be representative. The Jewish schools however also experienced a relatively low rate, but are more representative of the popula-

tion. It is interesting to note by coincidence or correlation, the Jewish schools experienced the greatest mean enrollment growth and were the only group to have a net increase in their pupil-teacher ratio during the period.

One could approach the explanation of these class size trends from different directions. One might rationalize that even though the data implies smaller class sizes in private schools, it may not be accurate in some way. Perhaps the survey mislead the administrators responding, or these additional teachers are being used in some other capacity than for traditional teaching. We doubt whether such conclusions are generally correct. For one thing, the surveys completed by the schools during the period were extremely exact in the definition of what constituted a "full time " classroom teacher. Separate survey data was kept on counselors, librarians, deans, administrators and other professional workers in the schools. Additionally, even though roughly 1/4 of the population participated in Federally funded programs, the data, applicable through 1979 (no data for 1980) indicated only Catholic schools had a net increase in participation, and that increase was only in Title I programs (2% of the schools). All other affiliations, and federal programs, show a net decrease in participation during the period (McLaughlin 1980, p29). Thus, it seems the best one can argue is that increases in Catholic school teachers may to some degree be absorbed by special education program increases. However, you are still left with a now even more significant problem of explaining the trends in all other affiliations. Not only have they increased the mean number of teachers, but cut participation in at least the federally funded special education programs.

The other approach to explaining such class size trends is more altruistic. One might conclude that the "smaller is better" trend is a conscious effort by private school administrators to facilitate improved effective and

cognitive outcomes of their students. As noted earlier, a large majority of the educational resesarch supports the premise. Is it inconceivable that deticated professionals would not put economics aside in order to improve the educational process within their schools? We suspect they would, and in some cases do. However, we also suspect the real impetus for smaller class size lies elsewhere and on more practical ground.

Stinnett in her review of Glass's meta analysis stated the majority of the research favoring cognitive and effective outcomes in smaller classes "simply reinforces what most parents believe, based on common sense and intuition, if not outright observation" (Glass 1982, p.88). The key here is what parents believe or know intuitively. Private education seems more attuned to the educational process itself, the students who attend it, and the parents who support it. One should be careful not to underestimate the influence of parents in private schools, especially when what they see as preferable for their children is educationally sound as well. It seems far more likely that private schools are decreasing their class sizes in response to what parents are essentially demanding: a high quality education, resulting from close interaction with professional educators in a managable setting.

Summary

Private schools are on the average "small schools" by definition. Even though the data indicates an enrollment decline for the period, most affiliations have recorded net increases in their school size. Regardless of enrollments, all affiliations report more teachers in 1980 than in 1976 and all but one have a corresponding reduction in pupil-teacher ratio.

Such trends are difficult to explain. In public schools, declining pupil-teacher ratios could be more easily attributed to declining enrollments

or mandated special education. However, neither of these explanations are applicable to most private schools. In economic terms, a reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio is an extremely costly endeavor. Perhaps private school administrators fear an even greater cost to their attractiveness and effectiveness, if they fail to head the implications of larger classes.

It is hazardous to make conclusions about the education process. It may be even more tenuous in the case of private education. Recent research does however lend credence to the idea that private schools must be doing some things right. Cocper's population studies continue to confirm dramatic rises in both number of schools and students in non-Catholic affiliations. Coleman 1981 comparison of private and public schools has many researcher taking a hard look at the positive outcomes in these small schools. Glass' meta-analysis of class size research speaks plainly to what most people have felt intuitively for years. It would seem that private schools are making staffing decisions with regard to the educational consequences. They apparently are demonstrating a commitment to the educational process and to the parents who support it.

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Trends in Private Schools: School and Class Size Implications

In recent years, there has been an unmistakable trend toward private education. Regardless of the reasons, private school enrollments in almost all affiliations (with the exception of Catholic schools) have increased dramatically since 1965. Even in Catholic schools the decrease has slowed to near zero and enrollment increases seem likely in the years ahead (Cooper, 1982). What is it that private schools are offering that attracts families of all races, ethnic backgrounds and religious denominations? This study provides one possible answer to this question in a narrow sense: through a trend analysis of school size and pupil teacher ratios. Specifically, we examine changes in per pupil teacher ratios in private elementary and secondary schools within a five-year period. Using two data tapes obtained from the National Center of Education Statistics we were able to determine that private schools have smaller class sizes in 1980 than in 1976 even though their enrollments have increased (even when controlling for small home school situations). One might expect that private schools tied by continuous financial burdens, would absorb new pupils into existing classes and thus increase their class sizes. However, this apparently has not been the case. This paper discusses trends in class size among private schools and examines why private schools are willing to maintain small class sizes regardless of the financial costs.

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